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AUTHOR Sizer, Nancy F.
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ABSTRACT

John Dewey's 2-year visit to China after World War I resulted in a continuing influence of his ideas on institutions and beliefs of modern Chinese education. Looked at against background of both traditional and Communist China, Dewey's ideas serve to illustrate the thesis that, while he is vilified, Deweyism is alive in Communist China and that his beliefs concerning individualism, democracy, moral persuasion, and theory vs. practice are still part of the Chinese philosophic concern. The current attempt of self-improvement in China is considered a central value in education. Dewey's idea of democracy is close to the Chinese tradition of government which relied more on the power of example and of persuasion than of force. From the point of view of the accountability of the regime to popular opinion, it is seen that Chinese Communists draw on a political tradition altered by Dewey's notion of moral persuasion. Institutions which are most essentially Deweyan today are the half-work half-study or May 7 schools which stress practice over theory, reminding one of the progressive movement in education. Dewey's definitions of individualism, democracy, moral persuasion, and theory vs. practice are not accepted in China, but progressive educational theories are practiced extensively. (Author/KSM)

Dewey, China and the Philosophy of Development: A Contrast of American Progressive Educational Thought and Practice with that of Modern China

April, 1974

Nancy F. Sizer

Historians often find themselves in wistful constructions of what-might-have-been. This is especially so for a tremendously creative and promising period in China's history just after the first World War. The "May Fourth Movement", called such because of a series of student-and-merchant-organized demonstrations against the Japanese and against the Versailles decision to let the Japanese have former German "rights" in the Shantung Peninsula, went way beyond purely xenophobic and commercial concerns. It was absorbed with a modern and workable definition of nationalism, with the rapid updating of Chinese culture, and briefly -- and tantalizingly -- with western ideas of liberalism, individual rights, and democracy.

It was during this period that the eminent pragmatist and educational philosopher, John Dewey, was invited to visit China by several of his Chinese former students at Columbia. He came, saw, was captivated by the unleashed energies and magnificent plans around him,[1] and proceeded to stay for more than two years, from May 1, 1919 until July 11, 1921. During that time he delivered several series of public lectures, taught for a year at the National Peking University, National Peking Teachers College, and National Nanking Teachers College, and did extensive traveling and lecturing in at least eleven

1. John Dewey, Letters from China and Japan, ed. Evelyn Dewey, N.Y., 1921, p. 150.

provinces. Articles in his honor were published in several of the small magazines flourishing during those thoughtful times, and a whole issue explaining his ideas was put out by Chiang Monlin, a former student at Columbia who had returned to China to found the New Education (Shin Chiao Yu)[2] magazine. An honorary degree was conferred on Dewey by the National Peking University in 1920, and his lectures were given good coverage by local papers.

One wonders why such adulation would have been given a western philosopher by the traditionally self-absorbed and philosophically well-endowed Chinese. The answer is that western material superiority had caused most Chinese severely to doubt their own ability to rid themselves of western influence except through western methods. During the first few years of the twentieth century, the Chinese began looking outward for help. Many, partly thanks to the Boxer indemnity which had been put into scholarship funds for Chinese to study in the United States, looked to the Americans.

"Returned students" were the new scholarly elite, and the leaders of the May Fourth Movement. Of them, Dewey's most famous Chinese student was and has remained Hu Shih, who was raised in Shanghai, educated in philosophy at Cornell and Columbia, and was, at the time of the May Fourth Movement, a professor of philosophy at Peking University. He traveled

2. For further information on this special issue see Nancy F. Sizer, "John Dewey's Ideas in China, 1919-1921", in Comparative Education Review, Vol. 10, No. 3, October 1966.

extensively with the Deweys, often did their translating for them, and was unofficial leader of a group which came to be known as the "Deweyites". Other members of this group were Chiang Monlin, Kuo Ping-wen, another former student of Dewey's who was rector of the Nanking Teachers College, Liu Ching-shu, who wrote on logic in Dewey's thought for the special issue of New Education, and Ch'en Ho-chin, in the Department of Education at Nanking.

Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei, one of the most famous of May Fourth Reformers, although educated in France, also came to be connected with Dewey's thought through his partial sponsorship of a new organization, "The China Society for the Promotion of New Education", which had the New Education magazine as its organ. The magazine's masthead read, in English: "The New Education stands for individual development and social progress", two aims which had long been linked by Dewey and his disciples.

The "Deweyites" promulgated an educational program which had great appeal, at least for a short time. It was based on a rejection of the "absolutes" which had dominated the classical education of the past, and embraced questing attitude which was especially appealing in the intellectual vacuum of those times. What Dewey and his followers advocated was "Method", empirical knowledge, openness of mind, basic intelligence of outlook, belief in the reasoning powers of the poor and lowly,

and the slow, gradual and logical approach to the solution of China's ills.[3]

Dewey's pragmatism in the context of those times was a tool whereby one could consider what about China's past "worked", and could be respected, what didn't "work", and must be discarded. The old classical language, which had limited Chinese literacy and even communication for centuries, would not stand up to the pragmatic test. The Deweyites' ideals included a tremendous growth in literacy and competency on the part of the Chinese masses; and so a new language, pai-hua, a written language which mirrored the spoken language, although it still used characters, was an important part of their agenda. Another plank of their program was co-education, one in which Mrs. Dewey was particularly interested.[4] Democracy, defined as the highest possible personal development and responsibility for oneself in a classless society, was another of Dewey's and his followers' goals.[5]

Excited though he was to be part of a political movement of such great promise, however,[6] Dewey, in his speeches, hesitated to take too firm a hold on his disciples, or to prescribe too closely what should happen on a concrete, detailed level. After all, he didn't know Chinese, nor China very well;

3. For a more detailed description of the Deweyites' educational program, see Hu Shih's writings quoted in Teng and Fairbank's China's Response to the West, A Documentary Survey 1839-1923, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 251-258.
4. Bertrand Russell, The Problem of China, London, 1922, p. 244.
5. Hsin Chiao Yu (New Education), I, 3, p. 307.
6. Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-Chen Ou, John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920, Honolulu, 1973, p. 302.

he had faith in his students; and he was content to be inspirer. His greatest contribution was as a philosopher of a gradual, non-violent humane solution to difficult but not insoluble problems.

As we all know, however, Dewey's goals and methods were not to be adopted by China. The times were too frantic; the western and Japanese threats too great; the poverty of the peasants was getting a little more desperate every year. In such a situation, the philosophical and gradual approach stands very little chance. China opted for the dramatic solution, led by a vanguard whose idea of education was of political tutelage; and Dewey was not only forgotten, he was vilified.

At first it seems strange that the Communists would have the time or inclination to bother about a harmless and kindly old democrat. But then the standard Chinese resentment toward the foreigner, and especially the foreigner who claims to have superior ideas, comes to mind. Besides that, Dewey was linked in most Chinese minds with Hu Shih, and Hu Shih, again perhaps oversimply, with Chiang K'ai-shek. Mao Tse-tung had reason to resent Hu Shih personally: when he was a self-conscious library assistant in Peking, during the May Fourth Movement, he approached Hu Shih after a public lecture, and Hu Shih refused to answer his question because he was not enrolled as a regular student.[7] Hu Shih, representing the Nationalists in

7. Stuart Shram, Mao Tse-tung, New York, 1966, p. 42.

Washington during World War II, living in New York after 1949, was in many Chinese minds the epitome of the "returned student" who had lost faith in China, and of decadent American individualism. He represents, in the mind of Mao Tse-tung and others, the kind of counter-revolutionary who hides under a cloak of idealism. "He was a rabid advocate of pragmatism in its most reactionary, subjective idealist form. This led him to support the Kuomintang's demagogic theories of piecemeal reform - and the whole philosophy of bourgeois individualism."[8]

From the beginning, Hu Shih was criticized for his preoccupation with language at a time in China when millions were starving.[9] With the concrete problems which China had to face, Chinese intellectuals were told, how could an intellectual justify theorizing, even about democracy?[10] The fact that Mao himself was involved in a literacy campaign during 1922 is excused on the grounds that, of the one thousand characters he was teaching the peasants in Hunan to read, a large number were frankly political.[11]

Although a careful reading of Dewey's speeches reveals that he did not realize how strong the threat of Communism was

8. {Translator's notes, Lu Ting-yi "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend!", printed in Bowie and Fairbank, Communist China, 1955-1959, Cambridge, 1962, p. 162.
9. Merle Goldman, Literary Dissent in Communist China, Cambridge, 1967
10. "Combat Liberalism", Mao Tse-tung, quoted in Hu Chang-tu, Chinese Education under Communism, N.Y., 1962, pp. 62065.
11. Schram, op. cit., p.66.

in China, the official interpretation in the mid-fifties in China was that Dewey was invited to China for the express purpose of "countering the budding interest of Chinese intellectuals in Marxism".[12] Finally, even Ch'en Ho-ch'in, a young Deweyite during the twenties, was forced to recant in public confession.[13]

The confession is itself revealing of the influence which Dewey's followers had over intellectuals during the twenties and thirties, an influence not so easily eradicated precisely because it was cultural rather than political. The movement to vilify Hu-Shih and Dewey was done during a time when the C.C.P. was trying to harness China's intellectuals more closely to the national industrial effort. All "obscurantism", however harmless, was suspect.

Even then, they were not entirely successful. Not only were the "ghosts" around, as Hu Shih puts it, to trouble the Party for a while longer,[14] but even the name itself cropped up publicly as late as 1964, when, in a conversation with Chairman Mao, someone complained: "Students are burdened with work. There is homework for every subject. (We) have three systems - Confucian, Dewey, and Russian." Mao didn't react particularly

12. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 17.
13. Ch'en Ho-chin, Critique of the Philosophic Bases of John Dewey's Reactionary Pedagogy, cited by Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 27
14. Hu Shih, "Dewey in China", Philosophy and Culture East and West, ed. Charles A. Moore, Honolulu, 1962

sharply to the news that Dewey was still influential in China, contenting himself with saying simply: "Let us do away with both foreign and native dogmatisms."[15]

We may agree that John Dewey's influence in China was once fairly extensive, and that his name is now either unknown or in bad repute among educators in China. But there is more to consider before we reluctantly close the door on the subject of his influence. Although his name may not always be linked to his ideas, and so his influence uncertain, a careful look at several of the institutions and beliefs which seem to be dominant in modern Chinese education will often remind one of the very ideas which Dewey himself promulgated during his twenty-six months in China. This may lead us to the conclusion that while Dewey is vilified and "Deweyites" have had their thoughts reformed, "Deweyism" is far from dead in Communist China.

Four of Dewey's main ideas, looked at against a background of both traditional and Communist China, may serve to illustrate this thesis. These are Dewey's beliefs concerning individualism, democracy, moral persuasion, and theory vs. practise. Each of these have been at the center of Chinese philosophic concern for centuries; each is being worried about now, even during a period of what seems to be intense political unrest.

First, individualism. Chinese for centuries have considered man perfectable, cultivatable; since Confucius his constant effort

15. Jerome Ch'en, Mao Papers, New York, 1970, pp. 94-95.

to better himself has been understood to be the greatest service which he could render others. Since the Taoists, the understanding of which man is capable has been considered natural, approaching the supernatural. Although each man is seen by Confucians in terms of his relationship with others, still the uplift involved in self-improvement has been considered to be the central value in education.

If this be idealism, nevertheless it is an idealism which was at least originally in the heart of the Chinese tradition. Over the centuries, as the examination system became more and more rigid, sheer memorization replaced moral ardor as the goal of education. A few mavericks tried to return to earlier ideals, among them Wang Yang-ming, whose work seemed so appropriate to Chiang Monlin when he was trying to liken it to Dewey's.[16] Dewey, with a westerner's belief in the power and reasonableness of the well-educated human, could be sympathetic both to the original Confucian position and to those rebels in the May Fourth Movement who were rejecting the Confucian tradition.

Dewey, like Confucius and Wang Yang-ming, believed that innate in each human is an urge to grow and to develop, to realize his fullest human potential. "Educating" the child is only a matter of letting this individual development progress smoothly:

> His natural inclination to ask questions and his love of adventure can be developed into a love of learning and the stance of courage.

16. Chiang Monlin, A Study in Chinese Principles of Education, Shanghai, 1924.

> His pleasure in playing with other children can be made the foundation of habits of cooperation and association - or it can be suppressed so that the child grows up to be an isolated and lonely person.[17]

Dewey's own feelings about individualism were somewhat ambivalent, however. Although he admittedly came from a tradition of belief in the greatest possible personal freedom, as a good progressive he had been through the arguments in America over "freedom of contract", and had come to believe that there are times when a person's widest liberties must be abridged for the sake of the "public interest". Using a common American example of the time, but also one of especial interest in modern China, he said:

> .... to talk about a contract made by the free will of both parties when there is a marked disparity in ability is to make a bitter joke. Let us take an illustration. A capitalist, let us suppose, owns everything -- buildings, machinery, raw materials - everything except workers. But there are more workers available than the capitalist could possibly use. They all want work, so the capitalist can hire as many workers as he wants, and pay them as little as he pleases. If the workers don't like it, they can quit, and the capitalist can hire others for the same wages he has been paying. Under such circumstances, one can say that the contract between the capitalist and the worker is the result of the exercise of free will; but in actual fact, the worker accepts the contract only because he and his children have to eat, and his choice is to work for whatever the capitalist will pay, or else see his children go hungry. There is not even a pretense of equality in the two parties to such a contract, nor does a contract such as this promote either the individual development of the worker or the improvement of the society.[18]

17. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 263.
18. Lecture entitled "Classical Individualism and Free Enterprise", quoted in Clopton and Ou, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

Dewey went on to sound more Confucian than Jeffersonian when he gave as his opinion the fact that a personal arrangement cannot be considered on its own entirely but as part of the society which causes it, and as subject, therefore, to standards of health or welfare to which the society as a whole subscribes.[19] A man's identity, therefore, is the responsibility and the product, at least partly, of his society; the two are intertwined. Too great an overlap would cause a man to give up that self-cultivation which made him uniquely human and would, Dewey warned, stifle individual initiative;[20] too great a disparity between them would lead to individualistic self-seeking and social harm. As Dewey put it:

> Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.[21]

The necessity of merging these two directions -- toward personal development, toward consideration of the 'public interest' -- has troubled thinkers in Communist as well as traditional China. While the "mass line" would have it that individualism is dead in China, nevertheless, 60 million Chinese have learned to read, and reading has usually been a big spur to self-development. For the 90% of China which was cut off from the glittering seaports during precommunist days, the C.C.P. has been a mind-blowing experience. Dewey's reservations about

19. See also Chow Tse-tung, The May Fourth Movement, (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 229-230 for more of Dewey's statements on "social legislation".
20. Chow, op.cit., p. 229.
21. John Dewey, The School and Society, p. 7, Chicago, 1958.

untrammeled "freedom of contract" have been echoed by the regimes constantly; and the public interest is ever kept before Chinese minds. Yet any look at life during the last twenty years emphasizes opportunity for personal growth as one of its assets, not as compared to a western experience, but certainly as compared to the pre-1949 experience of an overwhelming majority.

By democracy, Dewey meant equality of responsibility for the management of a society's affairs. This definition does not in any way fit in with communist "vanguard" theory, in which there are only a few dedicated and skilled leaders who are in constant contact with a body of theory (the "mass line") which enlightens them as to what is the best course to take, the one best for the greatest number, but without specific direction from that "greatest number". Chinese tradition supports "vanguard theory" much more than would western democracy: "One sun in heaven, one ruler on earth", an old Chinese saying, was used to justify the imperial system and could be used to justify Mao. The "correct line" is what in the old days would keep one from losing the "Mandate of Heaven": it is the instinctive awareness of the rights and welfare of all, of what "the people" really want, without having actually to consult them in any systematic way.

Dewey's approach to democracy was less forceful, more cumbersome. Dewey was a gradualist, a believer that 51% of

the people should know and understand and endorse something before it is undertaken on their behalf. He was closer to the Chinese tradition of government, which relied much more thoroughly on the power of example and of persuasion than of force.

Deweyites, in the May Fourth Movement, in stressing the need for widespread literacy and a coherent intellectual revolution to precede any political revolution, tended to agree with him.[22] Traditional Chinese disdain for the "command ethic" when a "virtue ethic" is available instead, is endorsed by Dewey's statement in China: "We advocate freedom of speech because we have found that persuasion is more effective than coercion."[23] Hu Shih also stressed the part which inspiration, rather than fear, can play in developing a revolutionary:

> It is not a disgrace for a nation to lack a Navy; or to lack an Army! It is only a disgrace for a nation to lack public libraries, museums, and art galleries. Our people must get rid of this kind of disgrace![24]

Despite western reactions to the contrary the Chinese Communists, while not abandoning force as a technique, have also used persuasion tremendously as a tool, both for creating a favorable climate for the Communists' take-over in 1949, and as a method for sustaining the power and progress of the revolution. In backward, socialistically inclined communities

22. John Dewey, "The Sequel of the Student Revolt", The New Republic, XXI, p. 380, March 3, 1920.
23. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 175.
24. Chow, op. cit., p. 28.

like Liu Ling in Shensi province,[25] one can see that part of the Communists' propaganda was to portray the Red Army as the kindly, persuasive soldiers, with the Kuomintang generals taking the heavy-handed approach. "High-pressure gradualism" was used by them as a respected technique.

What is to distinguish "high-pressure gradualism" from brainwashing, however? For that matter, what is to distinguish any persuasion from brainwashing? The line is fine indeed, as John Dewey pointed out:

> Even those who unequivocally oppose the use of physical or legal force admit the inescapability of moral or psychological forces such as persuasion, instruction, or reprimand. But this raises the question of whether there is a valid distinction between psychological force and physical force. As I see it, no clear-cut distinction can be made. Even the most despotic tyrant could not possibly rule all his people by physical force. He could not imprison the whole population, nor manacle them, nor order them to do this and refrain from doing that against their will. He can rule successfully only when he exercises some sort of psychological control over his subjects.[26]

Besides the degree of power which supports moral persuasion in modern China, there are other subtle differences between persuasion as envisioned by Mao and as envisioned by Confucius or Dewey. The latter saw themselves as moral, cultural, rather than "political" persuaders, but in modern China, when "politics is in command", one can be sure that another of the famous

25. Jan Myrdal, Report from a Chinese Village, N.Y., 1965.
26. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 127.

Chinese "campaigns" is starting up. Political leaders, rather than being considered cold, bloodless, self-seeking, are the greatest moral educators around. "Redness" is the equivalent to Confucius' "moral force", and "redness" is frankly and proudly political. Like Confucius, it claims not to be self-seeking, dedicated only to others and to the promotion of the complete revolution within China.[27]

Thus, from the point of view of the accountability of the regime to popular opinion, and of the role of persuasion by the members of the elite in forming popular opinion, one can see that the Chinese Communists are drawing on, but also altering, a Chinese political tradition.

If one considers democracy more broadly than just as non-violent gradualism and parliamentary democracy, however, and adds the concept of equal opportunity and eventual classlessness to one's original definition, then Dewey's goals seem to be very similar to the Chinese Communists'. He was as worried about privilege, profit, and misplaced authority as they are. He rejected, as they do, the notion that what is good for the strongest individuals in a society is also good for the society.[28]

In stressing the dangers of too individualistic an approach to education, he wrote:

> The outcome of the theory (of education as autonomous individual growth) in practise

27. The People's Daily, November 10, 1969; Current Background, No. 899, January 19, 1970.
28. Chow, op. cit., p. 230.

> was shown to be an undue emphasis upon the training of narrow specialized modes of skill at the expense of initiative, inventiveness, and readaptability - qualities which depend upon the broad and consecutive interaction of specific activities with one another.[29]

In the United States, Dewey's methods of education emphasized that learning happens only when the person being educated is considered with as much essential dignity and respect as the educator. Simple though it sounds, this idea was revolutionary in America, and was especially revolutionary in a China which had revered and yet in many ways resented its literati for thousands of years. Even during his visit in China, Dewey criticized his former students when they seemed conceited, pedantic, superior; in many ways this undercutting of their authority as his interpreters weakened them and thus his philosophy. But his vigilance against "commandism" was ardent, and logical in terms of his theory.

A recent editorial in the People's Daily,[30] quoted by Ch'en, said: "Democracy sometimes looks like an end in itself, but in fact it is merely a means to an end." This end is the people's welfare, and Dewey would have agreed that it was of overwhelming importance. Although he was a democrat, he could understand why a country like China might want to adopt certain socialistic measures such as the nationalization of industry. He said:

29. John Dewey, Democracy and Education, New York, 1966 Free Press, p. 68
30. Jen-min Jih-pao, January 1, 1967, quoted by Ch'en, op. cit., p. 133.

> ...socialism, no matter what its shade, is centered on the one concept of the welfare of the total society, and this, rather than individual profit, should be criterion according to which economic organization and economic enterprises are judged. This same concept should be our criterion as we deal with the concrete problems which confront China today.[31]

The institutions in China which strike one as most essentially Deweyan today are what were called the "Half-work, Half-study" Schools during the 1950s, and are today called "May 7 Schools", after a directive issued by Mao during the Cultural Revolution. These are schools which are designed not only to impart knowledge, but also to inculcate the kinds of attitudes which both Dewey and Mao ardently believed were the right ones; that work as well as study is honest and valuable; that one can learn as much about the theory of something by practising it as by sitting inside and reading books about it; that one should always be on one's guard against "pedanticism", authoritarianism, "knowing too much", that open minds can solve as many of the world's problems as well-trained and cautious ones. For both men, this training prepares one for leadership, for they share the conviction that the best leaders will be moralists, rather than specialists, and will therefore be actually "taught" by the experience of country living and being exposed to the experiences of the people. As Dewey spoke of teachers being taught by their students, Mao speaks of "re-education".

31. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 124.

What is "re-education"? A young woman describes it thus:

> I believe I learned a lot during those thirteen months (spent doing 'voluntary labor'). I became a different person. I had acquired a fundamentally proletarian attitude to life. For example, before, in the summer, if I thought it too hot, I used to hope it would rain, without stopping to think whether the rain would be good for the harvest or not. I can never do that again.... That year also gave me self-confidence. I learned to rely on myself and my own capabilities. I am young and actually rather strong, and always have been; yet, before, I could scarcely even wash myself....in the end I realized that nothing was impossible, and that it had only been my bourgeois upbringing that had prevented me from relying on myself.[32]

Compare her description with what Dewey considered the best qualities in a properly educated person:

> .... the traits of good method are straightforwardness, flexible intellectual interest or open-minded will to learn, integrity of purpose, and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's activity including thought." [33]

Alternative forms of education were designed with different objects in mind, however, and must not be considered only as retraining grounds for possibly haughty cadres. During the 1950s, the "Half-Work, Half-Study Schools" allowed the Party tremendously to expand the number of people who were being exposed to some formal education, but without much extra expense. The schools were set up to be self-supporting, solving concrete problems which were troubling the people in the areas which the

32. From Ching Chi's description of 'voluntary labor, quoted in Jan Myrdal, op. cit., p. 327.
33. John Dewey, Democracy and Education, New York, Free Press, 1966, p. 179.

schools served. Thus biology was not biology, but agricultural or industrial or medical biology, and geared to the solution of specific local problems. In the course of solving these problems, not only would the students involved get the pride and sense of accomplishment which helpful effort brings one, but would also have more exposure to "pure" biology than they would have had without the school in the first place.

John Dewey also believed that the solution of concrete problems were an excellent entree into the process of education:

> From the very beginning of this series of lectures I have maintained that the proper function of social and political philosophy is to deal with concrete problems, and not merely to attack existing institutions by means of sweeping generalizations on the one hand, nor to offer doctrinaire solutions to problems in general on the other. [34]

What are the reactions to theory vs. practise in the Chinese tradition? They have been kept separate. Mencius said in 200 B.C. that educated people should govern, and that uneducated people should feed those who govern.

For centuries Chinese education followed this dictum, emphasizing a long, arduous education which stressed memorization of the Chinese classics rather than a body of knowledge which would have been immediately useful to the times. After such an education, the scholar "governed", but one can see that government was more by example than by specific application of

34. Clopton and Ou, op., cit., p. 124.

knowledge or skills to the problems of society.

With the rejection of the examination system after 1905, there were many who turned against scholarship as a means of making oneself useful to society. During the May Fourth Movement, in particular, a group called the "Work-and-Study Society" arose to promote the doctrine that only the two inseparable would lead to real education. Rejecting Mencius' idea specifically, they "... accepted John Dewey's idea that education is life and school is society."[35] Their program included having manual laborers learn to study and students learn to do manual work, and designing a society which would give equal credit to these two kinds of accomplishment. A "Work-and-Learning Assistance Corps" was established a year later, engaged in the same sorts of projects.

Mao himself founded a "Self-Study University" during the May Fourth Movement,[36] and has long believed in the overlap between schooling and working. During the Great Leap Forward, he lauded the half-work, half-study approach, by saying:

> In future, schools should have factories, and factories schools.
> Teachers should do manual work. It will not do to move only their lips and not their hands.[37]

35. Chow, p. 98; see also Y.C. Wang, Chinese Intellectuals and the West, Chapel Hill, 1966, pp. 109ff.
36. Schram, op. cit., p. 60.
37. Mao's instruction on 13 August 1958, as quoted by Jerome Ch'en, op. cit., p. 84.

Theory and practise, while complementary in the Deweyan and Maoist sense, can often come into conflict with each other when they each make demands on the energy, time or money of a person or a nation. Thus, it is that in the rapid industrialization which China undertook in the 'fifties and early 'sixties, theory (and specialized learning) was emphasized at the expense of practise. "Waste" was deplored, and it was for a time considered more efficient to train someone in a "pure" subject rather than to have him pick it up piecemeal while he was solving lower-level concrete problems.

The Cultural Revolution was in many ways a reaction against this thinking, and a return to the old "Theory and Practise" ideology. On May 7, 1966, in his directions to the People's Liberation Army, Mao described the kind of education which he wanted to see in China's future:

> .... our army should be a big school... The school years should be shortened, education should be revolutionized, and the domination of our schools by bourgeois intellectuals should by no means be allowed to continue.[38]

John Dewey's distrust of longwinded explanations, of planning so far into the future that any real usefulness of any given piece of knowledge is dim indeed,[39] is mirrored in the following conversation which Mao had on the dangers of pedanticism:

38. Jerome Ch'en op. cit., p. 104.
39. Clopton and Ou, op. cit., p. 226.

> "Someone says: 'there are two schools of educational thought - one insists on explaining everything thoroughly and the other on explaining the general outlines with emphasis on understanding, on how to use knowledge, but not on the amount taught. Many schools adopt the theory of explaining everything thoroughly.'
>
> Chairman: 'That is scholasticism which is doomed to perish. Take the study of the classics for instance. So many commentaries, but they have all vanished. I think students trained in this method, be they Chinese, Americans or Russians, will perish, will negate themselves." [40]

The May 7 schools, the hsia-fang ("downward transfer"), and the lao-dung ("voluntary labor") movements, stressing as they did the victory of practise and immediate problem-solving over theory and long-range accumulation of knowledge, was a victory for Chairman Mao and his ideas about education, and reminds one of the Progressive movement in education in the United States, whose inspirer was John Dewey.

Both John Dewey and Mao Tse-tung, as philosophers, have been on guard against thinking in narrow categories. Mao, in his constant reference to "walking on two legs" and "the dual line", is admitting the old Taoist idea that any one thing is at least partly made up and defined by its opposite.

By looking at the overlap in the thinking of these two men, we are discovering again this duality. Dewey's definitions of individualism, democracy, moral persuasion, and the necessary overlap between theory and practise, are not accepted in China.

40. Ch'en, op. cit., p. 96.

Yet "Progressive" educational theories are practised extensively. From the evidence, this overlap is sheer coincidence. As we are able to study further, however, we may find that the two men's ideas on education are substantially closer than either one of them would have thought.